# MR. PRATT

**A Tale of the Cape Cod Fisher Folk**

By

**Joseph C. Lincoln**

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**Illustrations by T. D. Melvill**



"I'll send you a check for my bill later," he says to the clerk. "All ready, Mr. Hartley."

We went out to the automobile. Martin started her up and we whizzed for the depot.

"Great Scott!" says the doctor, "I feel as if I had been pulled out of bed by the hair. Nobody but your father's son could do this to me, Hartley. Have you fellers fed yet?"

The Twin was too busy with the steering wheel to answer. I done it for him.

"No, sir," says I; "not since yesterday noon. Nor slept since night afore last."

Martin run the automobile into one of the horse sheds by the depot. Then he passed the stable man the bill that happened to be on the outside of his roll. 'Twas a tenner, for I caught a glimpse of it.

"Here," he says; "take this and wait here till the shofer comes for the machine. Well, skipper, we're on time, after all."

So we was, and ahead of it. We waited on the depot platform. I noticed that Hartley wa'n't saying much. Now that the excitement was over, he seemed to me to be mighty quiet. Once, when he walked, I thought he staggered. And he was awful white.

"Sol," he says to me, just as the train hove in sight; "you needn't come with us, unless you want to. Maybe you'd like to stay and attend to your boat."

I looked at him. "No," says I, "I'm going to see it through. The boat can wait."

I had to give him a boost up the car steps. As he got to a seat, he staggered again.

"Skipper," he says, quiet and with little stops between words, "I'm—afraid—you'll—have—to—look—out for the doctor. I'm believe I'm going—to—to—make a fool of myself."

And then he flops over on the cushions in a dead faint.

Doctor Jordan was at him in a second.

"It's his arm, I guess," says I. "He bruised it aboard the sloop."

The doctor pulled up Hartley's coat sleeve and felt of the arm.

"Bruised it!" he says. "I should say he did. The arm is broken."

Now you can bet that Martin Hartley wa'n't the only sick man aboard that train just then. There was another one and he'd been chirstened Solomon. When I heard that doctor say that the Twin's arm was broken I give you my word I went cold all over. Think of the grit of the feller—the clean up and down grit of him! Rampaging around, running automobiles and chasing doctors, and all that with a broken arm. And never even mentioning it. I took off my hat to that New Yorker. Crazy or not he could have my vote for any job from pound-keeper to president.

I wa'n't much good, but Dr. Jordan was a whole team and the dog under the wagon. He sent me for the conductor and between us we got Hartley into the baggage car and away from the crowd of passengers.

Then we rigged up a kind of bed for him on a pile of trunks and the doctor went to work.

He got Martin's coat off and his shirt-sleeve up and had a good look at the arm. Hartley opened his eyes while the examination was going on.

"Broken, doctor, isn't it?" he asks, weak.

"Yes," says Jordan. "Only a simple fracture of the forearm, though. We'll get off at the next station and find a comfortable place for you."

But he wouldn't hear of it. Not much he wouldn't. He was going to see that that doctor went straight to Eastwich. Said he'd had too much trouble getting him on that train to let him off it now, even if 'twas his neck instead of his arm that was crushed. There was considerable pow-wow, but finally Jordan give in.

"All right," he says. "Needs must if the old gentleman drives. The arm is in better shape than you deserve, considering how you've treated it. I'll make a temporary bandage, put you off at your home station, and come back and set the bone as soon as I can leave the boy. Hand me that box over there, conductor, please."

With a dive off a box in the baggage and pieces of Hartley's shirt, he spliced that arm as pretty as a picture. Then he rigged up a sling made of a couple of handkerchiefs, and there was the patient in pretty fair shape, considering.

When we got to Wellmouth the conductor—a mighty decent feller, he was—held up the train while I made arrangements with the driver of the Old Home house depot wagon to take Martin to the hotel. I was for going with him, but he put his foot down on that plan in a hurry.

"No, sir!" says he. "I want you to see that the goods are delivered. You get Jordan to the school on time and find out if there's anything else you can do to help over there. Then you can come back if you want to; but don't you show your head around me till the contract is carried out. If you do—well, my right arm's in pretty good condition yet."

In spite of the pain I knew he was in he managed to pump up a grin. I grinned back, but there was a big lump just astern of my swallowing gear.

The train got to Eastwich on time, and Lord James was waiting with the team at the depot. We drove to the Fresh Air farm like we was going to a fire. Miss Talford was at the door.

"Here's the doctor," I says. "How's the boy?"

"The pain is a little easier now, we think," says she. "Come right upstairs, Dr. Jordan. It was so good of you to come. Agnes hasn't slept since he was taken ill."

I followed the doctor and the Talford girl up to the bedroom. A mighty pretty room 'twas, too; all flowered paper, and colored pictures and sunshine. But I didn't notice these things much.

Poor little Redny! There he laid, in the middle of the big bed, his brick top shining against the pillow and the freckles on his nose like red paint spots on a whitewashed wall. He knew me and the first thing he said was: "Hello, Andrew Jackson." That was the name I'd always called him.

Agnes Page was there, sitting by the bed, holding the little feller's hand. She looked mighty hollow-eyed and pale. She shook Dr. Jordan's hand and thanked him for coming. She shook mine, too, and I noticed how her hand trembled.

The Duncan doctor was there, ready to begin his carving. Dried-up young squirt, with whiskers as scattering as corn-stalks in the Ozone garden.

"Er—Dr. Jordan," says he, "awfully sorry you've been put to all this trouble. Entirely without my sanction, I assure you. A most simple case of appendicitis. I should have operated immediately whether you arrived or not."

Jordan went across to the bed. He looked the boy over, careful as could be, thumping him, and listening, and asking questions about where he felt the worst, and all that. After a while he looked at Duncan, and says he:

"The pain doesn't seem to be localized as yet."

"No—er—not yet," answers t'other doctor, pompous. "But, of course, that's quite usual—often the regular thing. Er—yes."

Jordan nodded. Then he asked a few more questions; when the youngster was took sick, and how it begun, and the like of that. Finally he says to Redny:

"What have you been eating lately?"

"Aw, I don't know, sir. Miss Agnes give me some jelly and some mush and cream and—"

"Yes, I know. But those are what you've had inside the house. What have you eaten outside? I noticed an orchard back of the farm here. There were some very pretty late apples on the trees. How do they taste?"

Redny looked worried, seemed to me. He fidgeted with the edge of the bed spread.

"I ain't et only a few of 'em," he says. "The ones on the ground was wormy, so—"

Miss Agnes broke in here. "He couldn't have eaten those apples, doctor," she says. "I've expressly forbidden the children to touch them."

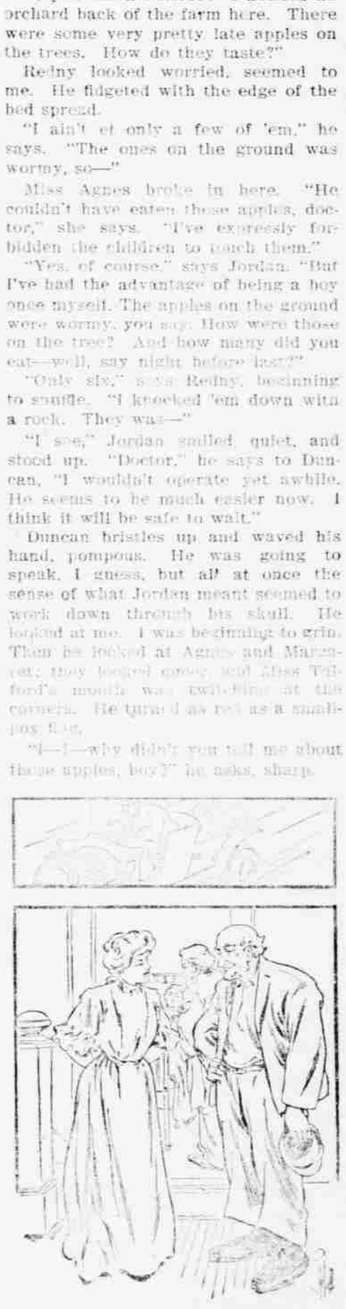
"Yes, of course," says Jordan. "But I've had the advantage of being a boy once myself. The apples on the ground were wormy, you say. How were those on the tree? And how many did you eat—well, say night before last?"

"Only six," says Redny, beginning to snuffle. "I knocked 'em down with a rock. They was—"

"I see," Jordan smiled, quiet, and stood up. "Doctor," he says to Duncan, "I wouldn't operate yet awhile. He seems to be much easier now. I think it will be safe to wait."

Duncan bristles up and waved his hand, pompous. He was going to speak, I guess, but all at once the sense of what Jordan meant seemed to work down through his skull. He looked at me. I was beginning to grin. Then he looked at Agnes and Margaret; they looked away, and Miss Talford's mouth was twitching at the corners. He turned as red as a small-pox flag.

"I—I—why didn't you tell me about those apples, boy?" he asks, sharp.



"I'm Coming to Ask His Pardon Myself, and—to Thank Him."

"You never asked me," snuffles Redny. "All you asked me was what I had for supper, and I told you."

"Green apples, hey?" says I, more to myself than anybody else. "Humph! Well, they never operated for them when I was a boy."

I went down to the kitchen pretty soon after that. Eureka was there and she and me had a big talk. Duncan come stomping down a little later and went out and slammed the door.

"Humph!" snaps Eureka, bobbing her head the way she always done; "he ain't going to get the chance to try his tricks on that boy. Pesky thing! Why don't he run a butcher shop? Then he could cut up and saw be happy, and nobody'd be killed except them that was dead already."

By and by Agnes came to the door and called to me.

"Mr. Pratt," she says, when her and me was in the hall together, "how can I thank you for what you've done for me and for that poor little child?"

"You can't," I says, short. "Because I ain't done nothing. It's Mr. Hartley that—"

"I know. Dr. Jordan has told me some. Please tell me the rest. How is he? Is his arm badly hurt? Is he suffering? Do you think there's any danger?"

Here was my chance. And I just spread myself, too, now I tell you. I spun the whole yarn, from the time the Dora Bassett pulled out of Horse-foot Bar cove to when Hartley was loaded into the Old Home depot wagon.

"He's a brick, that's what he is," says I, finally. "And he always was one. And there's one thing more I'm going to tell, now that I've got my hand in, Miss Page. That's about that business with Washy Sparrow. Mr. Hartley wa'n't no more to be blamed for that than a—"

She stopped me. "Please don't," she says. "I know; Eureka told me. And, Mr. Pratt," she adds, and her face lit up like there was a glory inside it; "I'm not going to ask you to beg his pardon for me. But will you tell him that, as soon as I can leave Dennis, I'm coming to Wellmouth to ask his pardon myself, and—to thank him? Tell him that, please."

Eureka and me drove back to Wellmouth together. If that old buggy had been trimmed up to match the feelings of the two inside it 'twould have been the gayest turnout that ever come down the pike road. No circus cart would have been in it.

But poor Van!

## CHAPTER XIX.

### Simple Versus Duplex.

I left Eureka at Nate Scudder's. She was going to have him take his dory and row her over to the island. She was to see to things there till I come. Dewey was all right and over his cold, she told me, so she could take up her regular job again. Scudder was glad to see us. I don't know but he'd been scared that his whole gang of lodgers had cleared out and left him in the lurch. I told him about the doctor chase. His eyes stuck out.

"Godfrey scissors!" says he. "It must have cost that Hartley man a lot for that automobile."

"Cost!" says I. "You bet it did!"

"I presume likely that'll come out of the doctor's bill, won't it?"

"No," I says, scornful. "Land of Goshen! No. Why should it?"

"Well, if 'twas me I'd take some of it out. The doc hadn't no right to be over to Brantboro after giving folks notice through the papers that he was to Wapatomac." He thought a minute more and then he says: "Say, Sol: don't you call me there's a commission coming to us from Ben Baker? He'd never let that auto wagon if we hadn't provided the customer."

Didn't that beat all? Sometimes I think Nate Scudder'll rise up in his coffin afore they bury him and want a commission from the undertaker. He'll never rest easy and see all that cash going to somebody else when he's furnishing the center of interest.

I found Martin planted easy and pretty comfortable in an upstairs front room at the Old Home. His arm was hurting him some, of course, but other ways he felt better, having had a nap and something to eat. He wa'n't sick in bed at least; and that's how I expected to find him.

I told him the good news from Redny, and it pleased him most to death. Then I give him the Page girl's message. He didn't say much, but 'twas plain to see how he felt. I promised to be back next morning, and then I said good-by. His good-by to me was sort of absent-minded. I left him smoking and looking dreamy out of the window.

I was in a hurry to get to Ozone, but I couldn't help stopping where they was digging the cellar for the new part of the hotel, and looking for our old friend Washy Sparrow. He was wheeling dirt in a wheelbarrow and he seemed mighty willing to let go of the handles and talk to me.

"Hello, Washy," I says. "How's the stomach and lungs these days?"

He groaned. "Pratt," says he, "I'm dying on my feet."

"Well," I says, looking down at his cowhides, "you'd ought to have plenty of room to do it in. What are you dying of—dropsy? You're five pounds heavier than when I see you last."

He shook his head. "Tell Reky I'm doing my best to forgive her," he says. "When I'm gone maybe she'll think how she treated me. Say! how soon's she coming home? Lycurgus can't cook fit to eat."

I told him Eureka 'd be home that night. It seemed to give him a little more hopes.

"When you see Miss Page," says he, "just tell her I want to talk to her, won't you? Tell her I'm 'most through with this world and I want to speak to her about providing for the children. Ask her to come over and see me."

Just then the foreman yelled to him to stop gassing and hustle that wheelbarrow along. He done it, surprising prompt, too, I thought. I asked the foreman about it.

"Oh!" he says, "Mr. Brown's give me the receipt for him. Every time he groans or coughs I set him to lugging stones; the louder the groans the bigger the rocks. He's getting well fast."

I took Nate's dory and went across to the island. Eureka was up to her elbows in work.

"Sakes alive!" says she. "Who's been letting this house get this way? The tea kettle bottom's burnt out and somebody's been trying to eat the ax. And the beds are so wet that the feathers are beginning to grow."

"That's the Natural Life," I told her. "The Heavenlies lived it for a whole day."

"I thought they lived it afore I come here at all," she says. "Things was bad enough then, but nothing like this."

"'Twas me that was the Natural then," says I. "This last attack hit the Twins."

"Do you know who I think ought to live the Natural Life?" she asks.

I said I didn't.

"Nobody but natural born idiots, that's who."

"I guess that who's been living it," says I.

Next morning I went over to see Hartley. He was feeling like a new man. Dr. Jordan had been there ahead of me and set the arm. Redny was pretty nigh well. Jordan had the right cure for green-apple appendicitis and it worked tip-top.

I drove up to the depot in the Old Home wagon and met Van Brunt. He was in fine spirits. The Tea Lead deal had been closed up—the Street pirates having decided not to pass the dividend—and the Heavenly Twins had made money by the keg, I judged.

"How'd New York look to you?" I asked him.

"Hush!" says he. "Don't speak lightly of sacred things."

When he heard about what had happened while he was away he was the most surprised man in the county.

"Skipper," he says, grabbing my hand, "you're a star of the first magnitude. You and Eureka are the redeeming features of this Natural experiment. You pay the freight and a large rebate over. And Martin! bully old boy! I want to see him."

Him and his chum was shut up together for a good half hour. When Van come down to the porch he beckoned to me.

"Sol," he says, "there's another question I want to ask you. Of course I know that Martin liked the boy and all that, but that reason won't quite do. What's the real one?"

'Twas a ticklish place for me. But I couldn't see but one way clear; that it, but one way which was best in the long run for all hands. So I spunked up and answered.

"Mr. Van Brunt," says I, "I hate to say it, but of course you know that your partner and Miss Agnes set considerable store by each other at one time. And you can't break off feelings like that same as you'd bust a piece of string. I—"

He nodded. "All right," he says. "I'm not altogether a blockhead. That'll do. I've been sure of it, myself, for some time."

"I understand," I went on, "that the reason she give him the mitten was on account of his being too grasping after money. If she'd seen him, like I have, just throwing it away as if 'twas shavings, I guess likely she—"

He interrupted and looked at me queer.

"How did you know that was the reason?" he asks.

I'd put my foot in it away over the shoe laces.

"Well," I stammered, "you see I—that is, 'twas told to me—and—course I can't swear—"

"Who told it? Oh, never mind. I see. Dear James! Well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful over a few things, and general superintendent and adviser of all the rest. Sol, I learned something when I was in New York. Considering all you've done and know, I think you're entitled to know more.

"When I was in God's settlement yesterday," he went on, referring to his home town, I judged, though I'd never heard afore that it belonged in that neighborhood, "I met an old friend of Hartley's governor—of his father, I mean. This friend had been abroad for some time and had just returned. He spoke of Martin, and what a fine fellow he was; to all of which I set my hand and seal, of course. Then he said that the way in which young Hartley had paid his father's debts and saved the family honor and credit was one of the biggest things he knew of. I expressed surprise. Then he was surprised to learn that I didn't know, being Martin's closest friend, and told me the rest.

"It seemed that Hartley senior was heavily involved when he died. He had speculated and his affairs were in horrible shape. Martin didn't know of this until the old gentleman, on his death bed, sprung it on him. So then the plucky chap started in to save the name. He arranged with the creditors—this man who told me the story was one of them—for time, and set to work. He worked nights and days and in his sleep, I guess. He had promised his dad, for his mother's sake, not to tell a soul, and he didn't. Every creditor was pledged to secrecy. Even his own mother didn't know it to the day of her death. But he paid dollar for dollar and broke down when it was over. That's why he was willing to join with me in this hunt of ours after the Natural Life. Agnes' cutting him made him reckless, I suppose. And when he was on his feet again financially he lost interest in the whole game."

"And now that he's well and husky," I says, "her mistake about his doings with the old man Sparrow set him going at it again. I suppose his digging in the hardest and keeping it quiet on account of his promise was what made her call him a money-grabber. I might have known 'twas something like that."

"So might I," he says, "if I wasn't such a careless, happy-go-lucky idiot. You see I always thought that the 'mercenary' business was only a cloak for the real reason of their breaking off. She only took up with me because our people wanted her to. I've been sure of that for a good while. But why Martin didn't come to me when he was in trouble, instead of going it alone like a bull-headed chump, is—"

He stopped and went to thinking. I looked at him and I guess there was a question in my face, for he answered it without my saying a word.

"Certainly I shall tell her," says he. "When is the next train to Eastwich?"

He went to the school that afternoon, and stayed at the Bay View house over there that night. Next day, afore I left the island, Hartley comes rowing over with Scudder. He was feeling chipper as could be and, except for his arm in a sling, you wouldn't have known there was anything the matter with him.

About eleven or so that forenoon Eureka comes running out to the henyard where I was. Her face was on the broad grin.

"They're coming," says she. "The whole of 'em!"

"Who?"

"Why, Miss Agnes and Miss Talford. Nate Scudder is rowing 'em and Mr. Van Brunt is along, too."

And so they was. I could see the dory half way across already.

"Hooray!" I sings out. "Let's tell Hartley."

"Don't you dare tell him," she orders. "He's in the house. You let him stay there. It's your job to meet that boat and keep the rest of 'em out of the way."

I was at the beach when the dory landed. Miss Talford and Van got out first. Then comes Agnes Page. She stepped up to me and held out her hand.

"Good morning, Mr. Pratt," she says. "I'm very glad to see you."

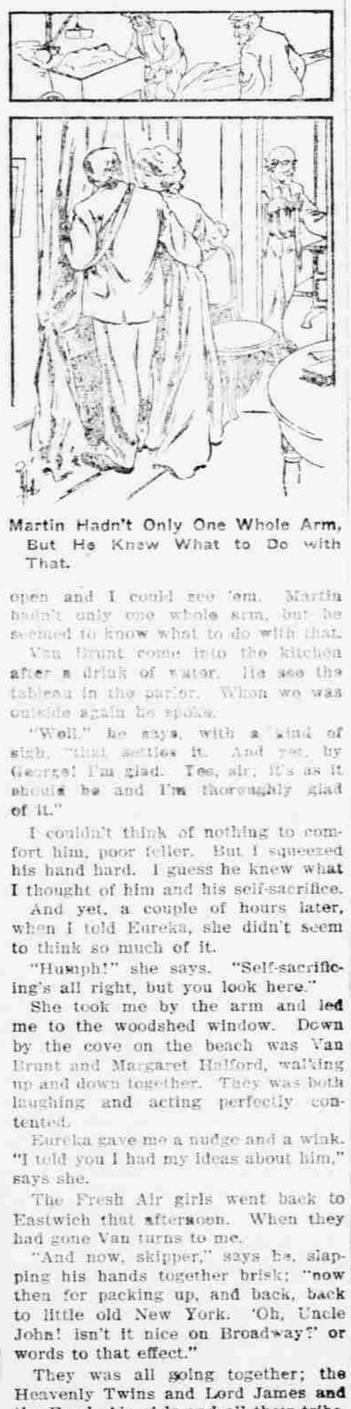
"Same here, ma'am, I'm sure," says I. "How's Redny?"

"Who? Dennis? Oh, he's almost well. We left James in charge of the children. Are you all well here? Is—"

"Yes, ma'am. He's doing first-rate. You'll find him in the dining room."

She reddened up like a climbing rose-bush in June, but she left me and headed for the house. The minute she stepped her foot on the porch, that wise critter Eureka dodged out of the kitchen door. She knew her business, that girl did, and whether it had come to her by instinct or from Home Comforter reading don't make an atom of difference.

About 20 minutes after that I happened to have an errand in the kitchen. I made a dickens of a racket on purpose when I went in, but 'twas good work wasted. Hartley and the Page girl was standing by the parlor window looking out, and didn't appear to hear a sound. They'd left the doors



Martin Hadn't Only One Whole Arm, But He Knew What to Do with That.

open and I could see 'em. Martin hadn't only one whole arm, but he seemed to know what to do with that.

Van Brunt come into the kitchen after a drink of water. He see the tableau in the parlor. When we was outside again he spoke.

"Well," he says, with a kind of sigh, "that settles it. And yet, by George! I'm glad. Yes, sir, it's as it should be and I'm thoroughly glad of it."

I couldn't think of nothing to comfort him, poor feller. But I squeezed his hand hard. I guess he knew what I thought of him and his self-sacrifice.

And yet, a couple of hours later, when I told Eureka, she didn't seem to think so much of it.

"Humph!" she says. "Self-sacrificing's all right, but you look here."

She took me by the arm and led me to the woodshed window. Down by the cove on the beach was Van Brunt and Margaret Halford, walking up and down together. They was both laughing and acting perfectly contented.

Eureka gave me a nudge and a wink. "I told you I had my ideas about him," says she.

The Fresh Air girls went back to Eastwich that afternoon. When they had gone Van turns to me.

"And now, skipper," says he, slapping his hands together brisk; "now then for packing up, and back, back to little old New York. 'Oh, Uncle John! isn't it nice on Broadway?' or words to that effect."

They was all going together; the Heavenly Twins and Lord James and the Fresh Air girls and all their tribe.

Concluded next week

# MUSICALE

### The Music Club Entertains for Mrs. J. Wirt Patterson.

On Monday afternoon the Music Club gave a musicale at the home of Mrs F. Buckley in honor of Mrs. J. Wirt Patterson.

In spite of the inclement weather nearly all the club members and invited guests were present and gave Mrs. Patterson a hearty welcome back to our city.

The musical program was given in two parts and during the intermission Mrs. Buckley served orangeade. At the close the club refreshments, ice cream and wafers were served.

Following is the program:—

PART I

Piano Solo, Mrs. Peck
Piano Solo, Mrs. Kepner
Sketch, Mrs. Buckley
Piano Solo, Mrs. Kirk
Vocal Solo, Mrs. White
Piano Solo, Miss Gibbs

PART II

Violin Solo, Mrs. Isaac
Vocal Solo, Mrs. Kines
Piano Solo, Mrs. Wilkerson
Piano Duet, Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Draper
Reading, Mrs. Patterson
Piano Solo, Miss Boynton

The invited guests present were Mesdames C. W. Johnson, C. W. Lehnhard, Andy Hawkins, John Walsh, Geo Edgar, Chas Bryan, J. Taylor, M. C. Hagler, W. C. Connerly, Chas. Anderson, A. Pettifer, Mahoney, Miss Isabell Breece, Mrs. H. W. Griffin, of Mena, Ark. and Miss Kreyer, of Ft. Scott. The club members were Mesdames J T Wilkerson, J. J. Peck, L. Isaac, Harry Kirk, F. Buckley, Kepner G. B. White, W. T. Kines, Walter Draper, Felix Miller, C. E. Gibbs, Misses Frances Gibbs and Lucile Boynton.

# PUBLIC INSTALLATION.

### Rebekahs Hold Very Interesting Session Monday Night

On Monday evening, January 25, the Rebekahs initiated candidates and held a public installation. Three young ladies were given the Rebekah degree—Misses Lottie Ruckel, Blanche Clutter and Bertha Campbell.

At the close of the initiation the officers were installed by Miss Iola Legrand, of Peirce City, District Deputy. Miss Flora Payne, of Peirce City, served as Grand Marshall and the ladies performed their duties in a most excellent manner. The officers installed were as follows:

N. G., Miss Delia Largen; V. G., Mrs. Julia Brown; Rec. Sec,, Miss May Randolph; Fin, Sec., Miss Flossie Charles; Treas., Mrs. Mary J. Mott; Warden, Miss Maude Hall; Cond., Miss Connie Jones; Chap., Mrs. Randolph; L. S. N. G., Miss Pearl Peters, R. S. N. G., Mrs. S. Clutter; R. S. V. G., Miss Ollie Draper; L. S. V. G., Miss Mabel Wormington; Ins. Guard, Miss Daisy Murphy; O. G., Miss Meta Norgin.

Following the ceremonies a banquet was served by the Odd Fellows and Rebekahs which was enjoyed by all.

The order is in a flourishing condition and growing in numbers and interest.

On Friday evening the degree staff will go to Peirce City to initiate candidates.

The managers of the local option fight in Lawrence county have decided to publish a semi-weekly paper during the campaign and have awarded the contract to the Peirce City Leader. Rev. A. J. Gearheard, of Peirce City will be the editor.

Mesdames Brite and Purdy and Mrs. Anna Buchner attended the reception in Monett given by Mrs. John Walsh and Mrs. Carl Lehnhard for Mrs. Wirt Patterson Tuesday afternoon.—Peirce City Journal.